黒鉄

KUROGANE

100% IRELAND MANGA

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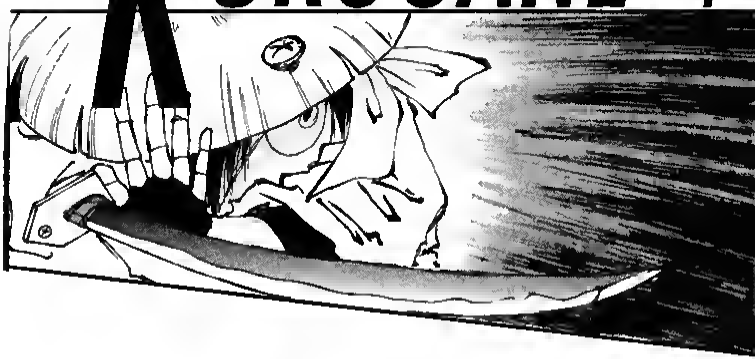
KUROGANE 4



Kei Toume

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A NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

Annual Event

Recent photograph of the author

HONORIFICS EXPLAINED

Throughout the Del Rey Manga books, you will find Japanese honorifics left intact in the translations. For those not familiar with how the Japanese use honorifics and, more important, how they differ from American honorifics, we present this brief overview.

Politeness has always been a critical facet of Japanese culture. Ever since the feudal era, when Japan was a highly stratified society, use of honorifics—which can be defined as polite speech that indicates relationship or status—has played an essential role in the Japanese language. When addressing someone in Japanese, an honorific usually takes the form of a suffix attached to one's name (example: "Asuna-san"), or as a title at the end of one's name, or in place of the name itself (example: "Negi-sensei" or simply "Sensei!").

Honorifics can be expressions of respect or endearment. In the context of manga and anime, honorifics give insight into the nature of the relationship between characters. Many English translations leave out these important honorifics, and therefore distort the feel of the original Japanese. Because Japanese honorifics contain nuances that English honorifics lack, it is our policy at Del Rey not to translate them. Here, instead, is a guide to some of the honorifics you may encounter in Del Rey Manga.

-san: This is the most common honorific ond is equivalent to Mr., Miss, Ms., Mrs. It is the all-purpose honorific and can be used in any situation where politeness is required.

-sama: This is one level higher than "-san" and is used to confer great respect.

-dono: This comes from the word "tono," which means "lord." It is an even higher level than "-sama" and confers utmost respect.

-kun: This suffix is used at the end of boys' names to express familiarity or endearment. It is also sometimes used by men amongst friends, or when addressing someone younger or of a lower station.

-chan: This is used to express endearment, mostly toward girls. It is also used for little boys, pets, and even among lovers. It gives a sense of childish cuteness.

Bazu: This is an informal way to refer to a boy, similar to the English terms "kid" or "squirt."

Sempai/ Senpai: This title suggests that the addressee is one's senior in a group or organization. It is most often used in a school setting, where underclassmen refer to their upperclassmen as "sempai." It can also be used in the workplace, such as when a newer employee addresses an employee who has seniority in the company.

Kohai: This is the opposite of "-sempai," and is used toward underclassmen in school or newcomers in the workplace. It connotes that the addressee is of a lower station.

Sensei: Literally meaning "one who has come before," this title is used for teachers, doctors, or masters of any profession or art.

-[blank]: This is usually forgotten in these lists, but it is perhaps the most significant difference between Japanese and English. The lack of honorific means that the speaker has permission to address the person in a very intimate way. Usually, only family, spouses, or very close friends have this kind of permission. Known as *yobisute*, it can be gratifying when someone who has earned the intimacy starts to call one by one's name without an honorific. But when that intimacy hasn't been earned, it can be very insulting.

黒鉄
KUROGANE
冬目景
FUYUME KEI

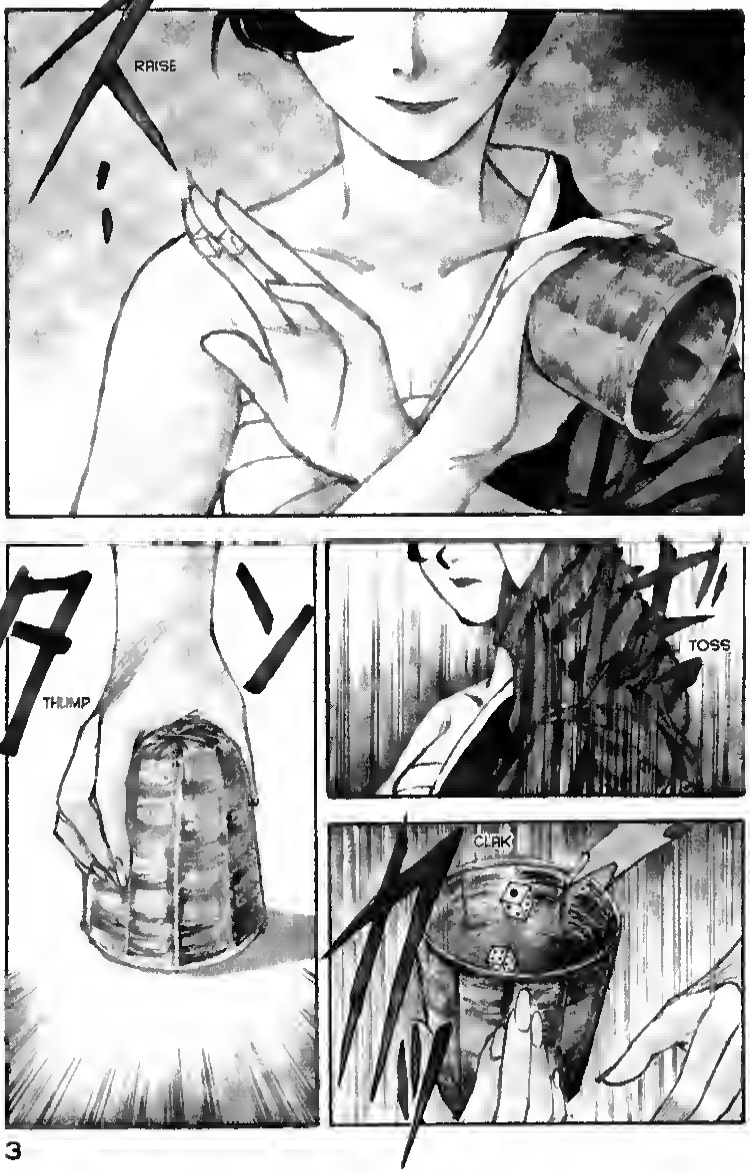
黒鉄 KURO GANE

RAMBLING
（将棋の女）

第一景 3
Episode 1
第二景 27
Episode 2
第三景 47
Episode 3
第四景 69
Episode 4

WHISPER DOLL
（雪夜夜心中追分）
"Lovers' Death on a Snowy Night"

第一景 93
Episode 1
第二景 119
Episode 2
第三景 139
Episode 3
第四景 159
Episode 4
第五景 179
Episode 5
第六景 199
Episode 6

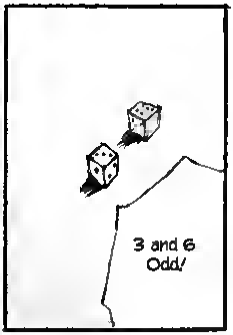

RAISE
TOSS
THUMP
CLAK

第十幕
RAMBLING
(操縦の女)
第一景
Chapter 10
Episode 1

C'mon!
Place your bets!
Odd!
Even!
It's even and a double!
Dammit!

What's up? He's winning like crazy.
He's some commoner.
Who the hell is he?
SLIDE
Great!
There's a lot of people here.

ゴク
GULP


3 and 6
Odd!

SLIDE

ZZT
ZZT

Wow..
JOLT
I told you the truth, didn't I?
Ryame!

Heh, you didn't seem so sure at the bar.
You changed your mind.
Hey, you were right!
I've never seen so much money!
Think about it. I was risking my life by...
...tricking a bunch of gambling toseiinins.
I string a piece of hair inside the bamboo cup.
That way, I can control the dice while I shake the cup
HAHA
I'll tell you my secret.
Man, you controlled the dice like I called them.
How did ya do that?

It requires a lot of practice and skill to do what I do.
I know it's cheating.
TINK
チャリン
Here's your half.
I see...
Let's see...
We made out all right.
What the-?!
You promised me half!
Whoa!
SNATCH
ぱっ

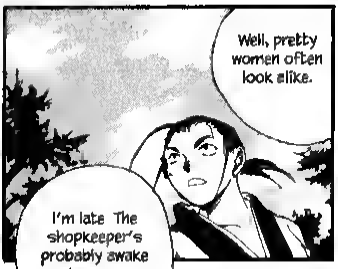
I hope you didn't develop a taste for gambling.
I ain't crazy. I don't have the guts.
Gambling is made to benefit the boss.
I still feel bad for cheating the boss, but..
Here's 10 ryou.
RUSTLE
Oh fine. Stop your whining and...
...I'll give you half.
Hey Ryame..
Do you do this for a living?
I do.
Long time ago, I was the daughter of a successful merchant.
My papa was a little too trusting.
He got caught up in some shady loans and my family lost everything.

As a result, I ended up as a drifter, but...
...it suits my personality.
あはっ
CHUCKLE

That's rough. I feel for you, lady
It's in the past. I'm over it

Ayame...
You seem different now that you're not working.

Ever since I met you...
...I've had this nagging feeling that I've seen your face before.


Well, pretty women often look alike.
I'm late. The shopkeeper's probably awake by now.

People tell me that a lot.
I wonder if my face is common.

I'll never come back here again.
Heh! Who cares.
Next time you're in town, drop by the shop.
Ayame, take care of yourself.
Nice meeting you.
I will.
EY!
GOSOH
ゴソ
Let's see..
Should I go North or East?

My dice doesn't have to tell me where to go.
This time, I have a destination...

SNATCH

Oh...
That's right.

The bridge in Edo...

Today was my last day...
... on this job.

Who...
...the hell are you guys?
ZZT
You had the nerve to cheat us on our own turf.
Our boss, Master Isuke, finances the gambling around here.
You want your money back, right?
I get it.
You uppity little wench!
You guys are quick.
Damn, I got caught already..

Just 10 ryou?
Cough up the rest.
There you go.
チャリーン
TINK
What are you talking about?
I gave my partner half, so he has the rest.
Damn!
. we found out that only the top and bottom coins were real. The rest are fakes!
Shut up We caught up with the bastard and he confessed. When he gave us the money...
Goddamned wench!
That dumbass...
You should still have 8 ryou. Hand it over.
Never!
It's best if you don't make a big fuss, boys.
What? How dare you!

I'm sure you don't want me spreading word to other money-lenders that...
..a woman cheated your boss out of 20 ryou
GRRR..
Goddamn witch...
If you want me to keep my mouth shut...
...I suggest you let me be
TUG
That's not gonna...
happen.
What do you think you're doing?
You think you have us by the balls?

That's why you can talk a big game
You know that tosei rules forbid the killing of women and children
If you're gonna ruin my master's reputation, then you're dead meat, and you've only got yourself to blame.
The tosei rules also mandate that we protect our boss.
Too little too late.
I can't trust that big mouth of yours.
Fine! Enough with your bullshit.
I'll give you my money.

THUD
THUMK
!
DASH
Say your prayers!
WHAM

Unk..
SLUMP
The red cape...
Crap...
You twerp, whaddya think yer doin'?!
The tassel on the Sando-Gasa...

It's Makoto, the Scarlet Sparrow!
I don't know what's going on, but...
...I can't imagine why a grown man would ever need to swing his sword at a woman
Looks like today's your lucky day, woman!
We don't wanna mess with 'im.
Hey, let's get outta here.

SQUEEZE
Can you stand up?
Here.
I can't believe you're the Scarlet Sparrow!
You are so adorable!
Wait a minute, lady!
Huh!?
Why don't you quit being a toseinin...
.. and work with me?

GRHHH!
ふに
SQUISH
...a...
I'm
...guy!
You're welcome.
She's weird.
GIGGLE GIGGLE
くく
No, you're not
Oh, I haven't thanked you yet.
Thank you for saving my life.

Who's there?
HA
HA
HA
ZA
It's you!!
TCCHI
Jintetsu, if you were watching, why didn't you help me?

You're looking good yourself...
..Ayame
It's been a while...
You look healthy
What the hell?
You know each other?
We met about a year ago.
He helped me out with a similar situation.
You are good at what you do.
I saw you at the gambling den earlier.
I would have let you win if you were playing.

I'm going to start my life over...
...in Inubushi.
I know.
Today was my last day. I'm quitting.
PAT
If you guys are...
...going down this road, you must be going to Inubushi, right?
You don't mind if I travel with you, right?
I may run into those men again,

THE END OF CHAPTER 10 EPISODE 1

第十幕
RAMBLING
(操賽(そうさい)の女)
—第二景—
Chapter 10
Episode 2

So I finally...
...told the guy that ..
I can't shake an empty cup.
HA HA HA
あはは。
.....
Sweet-heart, I've noticed. .
...that you don't laugh at all.
Sweet-heart?!
It's more attractive when girls smile.
Well, I'm not a girl anymore...
Like this!
HA...
.....

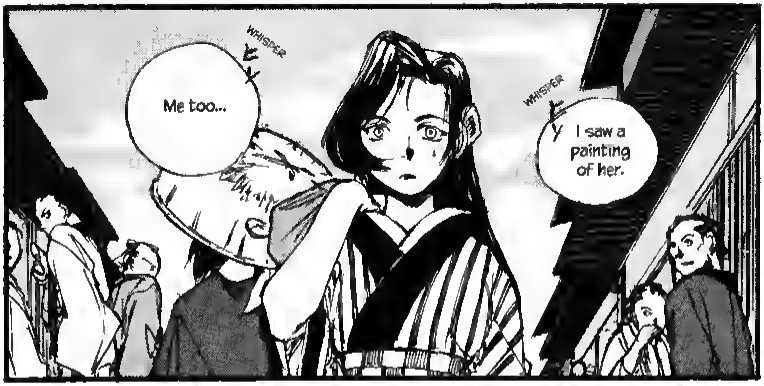
GRRR
That's too bad. Your pretty looks are wasted on you.
I can't smile like some idiot.
I'm taking a different road!
I'm not gonna take this anymore!
STOMP STOMP
I don't need people to treat me like a little kid!
I can't handle this crap!
CHUCKLE
Did I say something to upset her?

I never thought Makoto was a girl.
So, how did you guys meet?
I heard that Makoto the Scarlet Sparrow was the only survivor of the Akagi family,
and Renji the Fire-walker's partner.

She's waiting to kill me.

I don't get it...
It's none of my business.
Yeah, it's a long story. As long as I can look after Makoto, I don't mind she's trying to kill me.
Well, with your job, people are bound to have grudges.
I won't ask for details, but I heard you got along with Renji

It's crowded here, as usual.
I prefer desolate places myself.
It's the woman in the painting.
It's the woman in the picture!
She has to be.
?
WHISPER~


WHISPER
Me too...
WHISPER
I saw a painting of her.

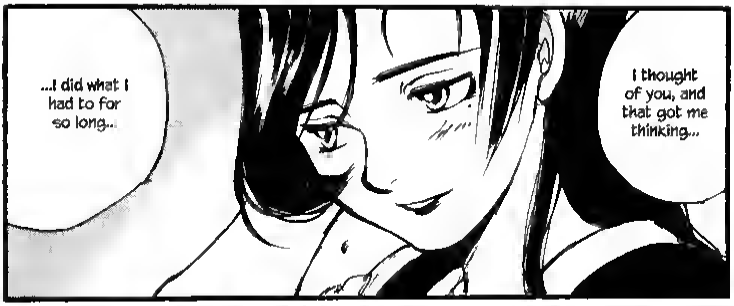
What on earth? I don't understand.
Nobody has ever painted me before.
Something about a painting.
Why are all these creeps starin' at me?
They probably mean I'm as pretty as a woman in a painting.

So where are you gonna go to start your life over?
Take care of yourself.
It's an inn called the Katsura.
I'll be working there.
—work an honest job?
Ayame's going to actually—

Katsura Inn
Ayame! Thank you for coming.
Please come in.
It's been a long time, ma'am.
It's been at least three years.
I'm glad to see you're doing well.
Same here.

Are you still a tsubofuri?
Thank you so much.
Thanks to you, I was able to pay off my debts and start my life over again in Inubushi.
Kind of...
I'm actually here to ask for a favor.
Stop that! You helped me out, too.

I was wondering if you would hire me?
It's about time I retire from that life.


...I did what I had to for so long...
I thought of you, and that got me thinking...

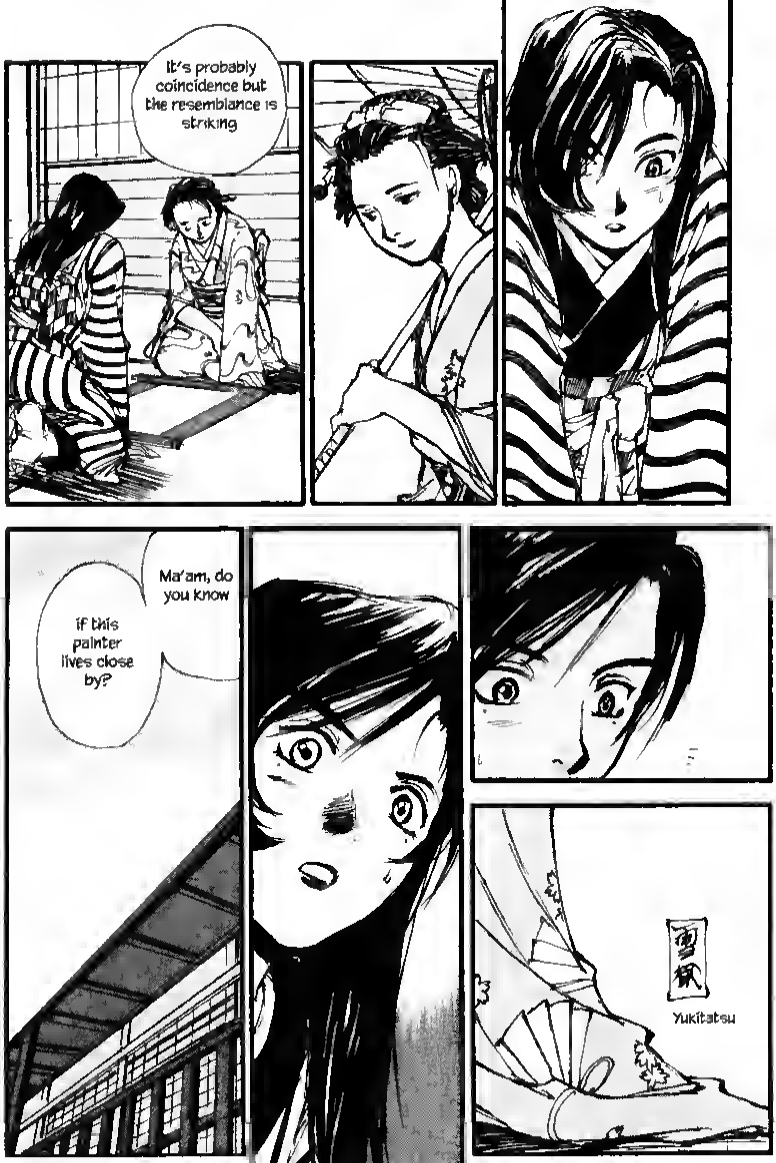
I'm glad you feel that way.
I'll be happy to have you on board.

CHUCKLE
I think everyone benefits from honest work.

--what you were doing forever.
It's not like you could do--

I think you'll be very popular here.
HA HA

...it's because of this painting.
I bought it to hang in one of the rooms.
FLAP
I thought people would say that...
I think...
That reminds me...
...People say that I look like a woman in a painting.
It's by a local artist. He's quite popular.

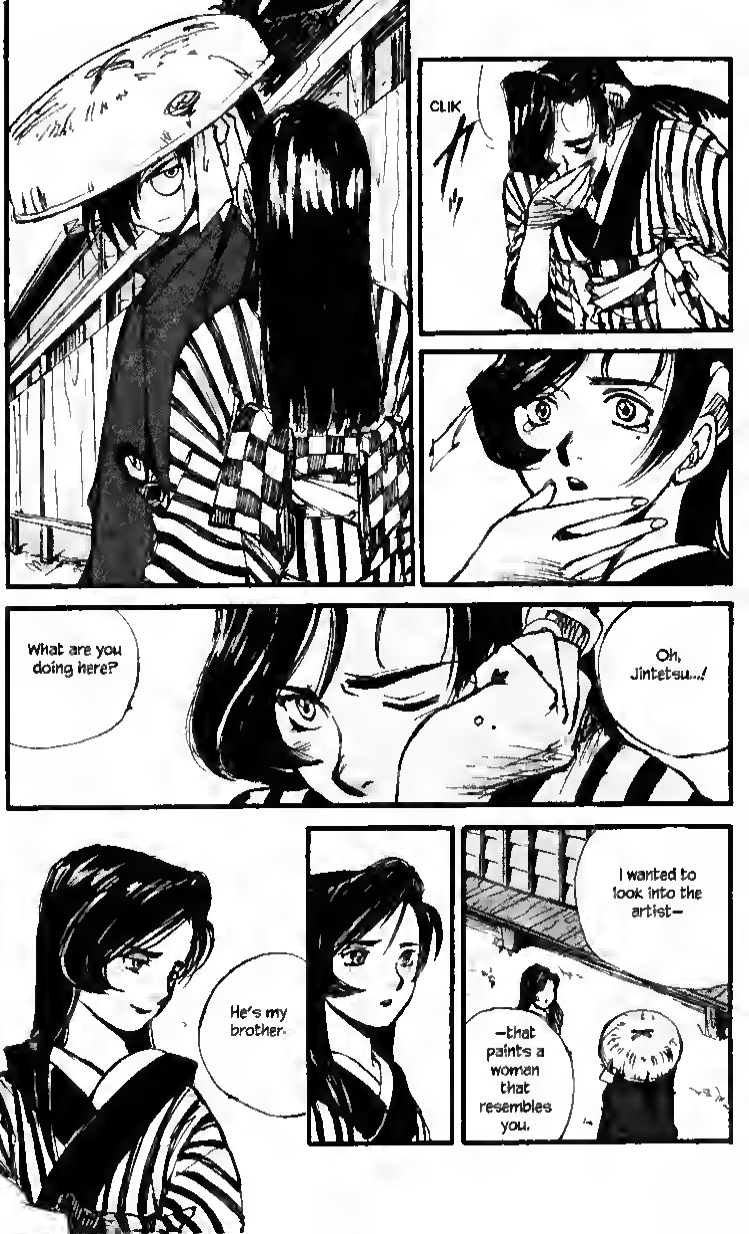

It's probably coincidence but the resemblance is striking
Ma'am, do you know if this painter lives close by?
雪狼
Yukitatsu

We know you're hidin' more!
This won't even cover the interest.
I swear! This is everything!
SLAM
Hey, don't injure his right hand.
Don't be a friggin' liar!
SLICE
Huh?
CRW

BASAH
THUD
Dammit...
Uh?
Excuse me... thank...
..you, sir.

My name is Yukitatsu Ujyou.
Yes.
Is that paint?
You're a painter?
SLIDE

Yukie...


CLIK
What are you doing here?
Oh, Jintetsu...!
I wanted to look into the artist—
—that paints a woman that resembles you.
He's my brother.

I can't.
Why don't you go see him?
I told you a long time ago that my father was a wealthy merchant.
After his business went bankrupt, the family split apart and we all had to fend for ourselves.
You saw his paintings.
He remembers me as I was back then...
...when I was still pretty
.....
Back then, I was a legitimate lady, both in spirit and the flesh.
How could I show my face...
...after what I've become?

I see that he's found his own path

He always loved to draw, but since he was...
...the heir, my father discouraged him.

Good day, Yukitatsu.

.....

I think it's better...
...for him to forget about the past.

Kanouya-san!
How is the painting for Kikuya-san coming along?

So, have you thought about..
...the offer yet?
You've become so popular.
I owe my popularity to you, sir.
Recently, there were people from the coast looking for your art.
About starting a gallery in Edo? I'm grateful that
you would think of helping me find clients in Edo, but...
...I don't think it's possible.
After all...
...I'm bound to this town due to my debt.

THE END OF CHAPTER 10 EPISODE 2

第十幕
RAMBLING
(捜索の女)
—第三景—
Chapter 10
Episode 3

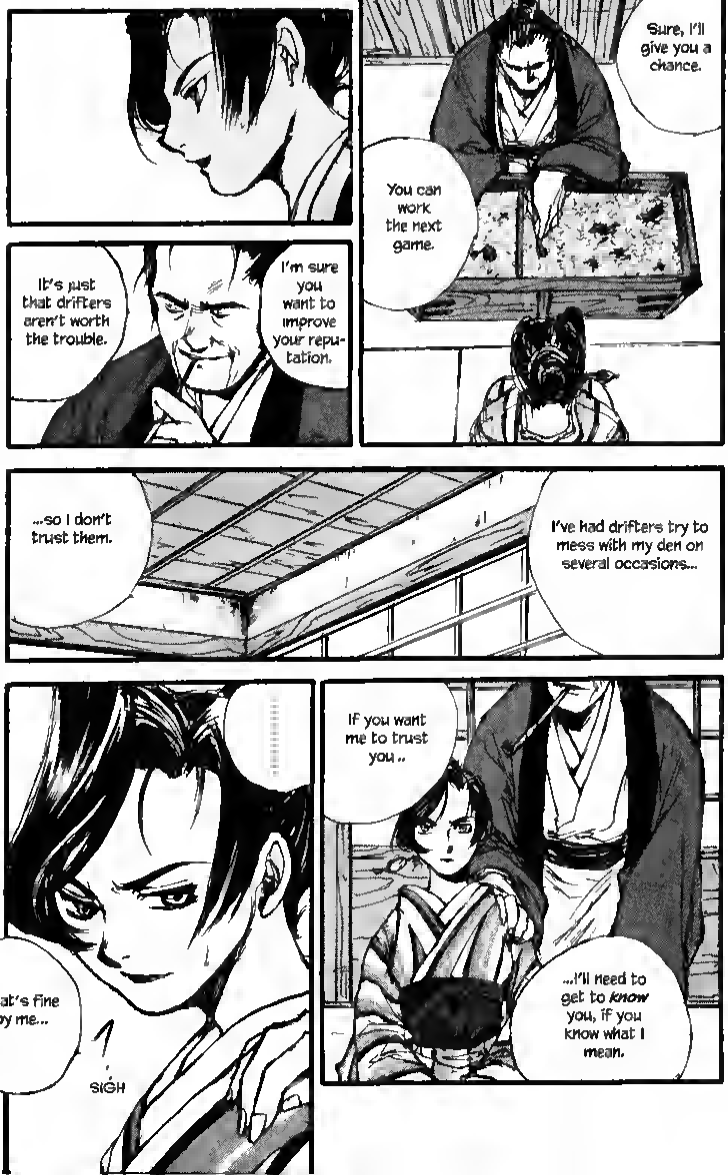
Katsura Inn
After all, I'm bound...
...to this town due to my debt.

I'm aware of that, but I have no choice.
Karatachi family's boss is a sharp man when it comes to money.
Once he gets wind of your popularity, he's going to extort money from you for as long as you live
The debt belonged to the old man that lived next to you.
As long as I remain a painter, I can't escape.
I know you agreed to pay it because you wanted to defend that old man from the thugs.
GRIP
ROLL
ROLL

TINK
Odd!
Crap, I lost again.
Yeah, it's been the talk of the town.
Did you see the painting of the woman?
SLIDE

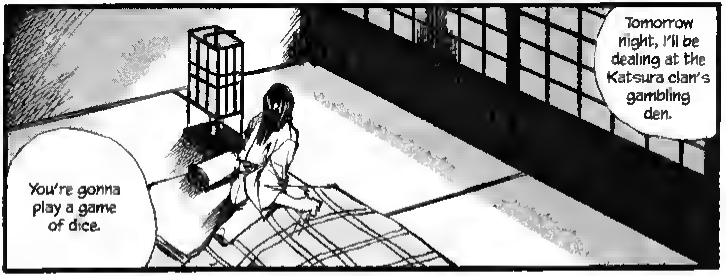
I am Ryame, a tsubofuri.
I need to talk to your boss.
Good evening, gentlemen.
I never knew that the beautiful woman in...
...the painting was a tsubofuri.
I've heard a lot about you.
I hear you're quite business-minded for a toseinin.
I'm just a drifter.
I'm shocked by the resemblance myself.

Are you trying to say I'm very good with my money?
I'm just good at running a gambling den.
About your business...
I've been a tsubofuri for seven years, but they're all owned by cheap bastards.
I've always wanted to work at a gambling den like yours.
What do you think?
I was wondering...
...if you'll let me work during the next game.
I usually don't work with drifters but...
...I think you'll attract a lot of attention

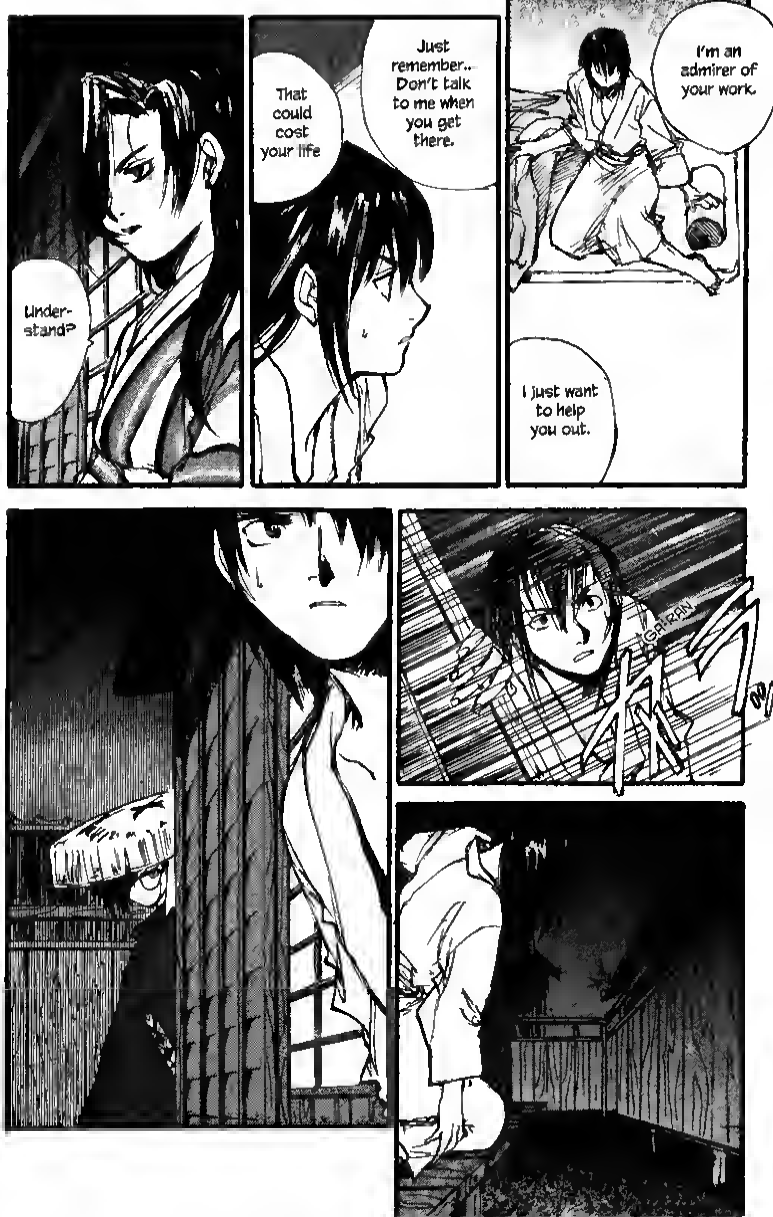

Sure, I'll give you a chance.
You can work the next game.
I'm sure you want to improve your reputation.
It's just that drifters aren't worth the trouble.
I've had drifters try to mess with my den on several occasions...
...so I don't trust them.
If you want me to trust you..
...I'll need to get to know you, if you know what I mean.
SIGH
That's fine by me...

KNOCK
KNOCK
Who...
...is it?

What?
Your debt...
I can make that go away.
I'm not a stranger.
I'll keep it short, so hear me out.
Please don't light your lamp.


You're gonna play a game of dice.
Tomorrow night, I'll be dealing at the Katsura clan's gambling den.

Uhm...
Got that?
Who are you?
You don't have to do anything special.
Just choose between even or odd.


I'm an admirer of your work.
I just want to help you out.
Just remember.. Don't talk to me when you get there.
That could cost your life
Under-stand?
GHRRN

CREAK
ZZT
Place your bets!
It's already started...
I can't believe I'm here..
I'm an admirer of your work.
SLIDE

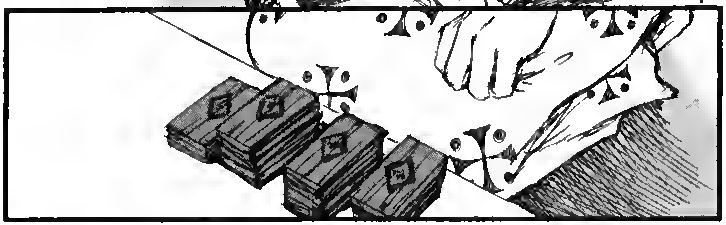
THOMP
Even!
Odds!

A...
...yame...?

How..
That can't be..

Mister.
..sit down and place your bets.
That woman in the painting is a gambler.
I hear she's a drifter.
Ryame..
Goin' in!
.....

4 and 1... Odd!
SIZZLE



That kid is on a lucky streak.
I don't think he's a regular.

I don't think he'll go home with the loot.

...Eitaro. He's the Boss of this joint.
See? Here comes...
You're awfully lucky tonight, Yukitatsu-san.
I'm the Boss of the Karatachi Family.

Let's bet on your entire winnings, 50 ryou.
All right...
He painted the beautiful woman, right?
Yukitatsu?
Why don't we play against each other?
It'll be a one-time shot.
We'll play ohme shome*
PAUSE
Clean 'im out.

*Ohme Shome: Played with a single die, you bet on shome—numbers 1–3, or ohme—numbers 4–6.

TOSS
Ohme
CLAK
Shome

Shome!
That's a hundred ryo!
GRAB

What...
What the hell?!
You and the artist were in on this together!
Bitch!
You're a goddamn swindler!
LEAP
SHAKE

That's right! I tried to con you!
Dammit, I'll come clean.
Kill me, but leave the kid alone!
I won't kill ya.
Don't you dare touch this kid!
Don't worry.
I'll just teach you a lesson you won't forget.

THE END OF CHAPTER 10 EPISODE 3

第十幕
RAMBLING
(操賽の女)
第四景
Chapter 10
Episode 4

IF you're gonna kill me, hurry up!
You've got guts, woman...
SWING
LIFT

Yukie!
THUD
What the...
DASH
What's going on, kid?
Get outta the way!
No!

If you're gonna kill her,
you're gonna have to kill me too.
Yukie!
THUD
Boss said he'll save yer life!
Shut your mouth, kid!
KICKK
Get outta the way!
Ryame.
Get out of their way!
It's all right, Yukie!

THUD
SMASH
Even the woman's telling ya to move!
SLAM
UNH..
Yukitatsu!

You've created quite a mess.
Why don't you...
...just get this over with?
I don't like to torment women...
CRACK
You'll be dead before you know it.

THUMK
RATTLE
カラ
RATTLE
カラ
BASAH
BASAH
Whoa!
Who the hell—?!
CAW

Jintetsu of Steel...
I didn't hire you for a hit.
You're Jintetsu of Steel?
Yeah, but the lady over there did.
Whaddya want?
What?
That whore...!
Jintetsu!

WAVER
C'mon! Go get 'im!
Kill him!
SLICE
Don't worry, I'm only after your boss.
However..
CLICK
Huh?
GYAAAH!

GUAH
That doesn't mean...
...I'm not gonna...
...dish out some pain!
THRUST
DASH
Crap!

RRRIP!
!
Eitaro isn't your...
...real name, is it?
Abandoning your men, eh?
GGG...
You were a high-interest money-lender in Tobisuka.
Your real name is Sataro.

You always enjoyed gambling..
...so you figured you would make more money by securing territory for your clan and opening a gambling den.
You would target trusting shop owners and fleece them out of their property. The money you made from selling the stores...
...went into starting the Karatachi Clan.
You bastard...
Where did you find out about this?
Heh!
I pick up information along my travels.
The world runs on money.
You can build a clan on money without swinging a damned sword.

CLANG
Money attracts men willing to do the dirty work.
CLICK

WHOOSH
THUMK
STAB
THUD

Jintetsu!
ZZT
You can pay me for this information...
...later, Ayame.

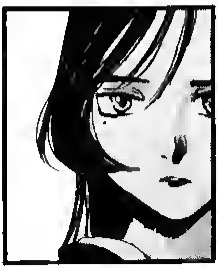
Are you all right?
I'm fine, sis. How about you?
Sis, eh .
You haven't called me that in about seven years.
You've grown up...
...Yukie
You're still the same.

I'm nothing like my old self.
That's not true.

What are you talking about?
We're gonna stay together, right?

Yukie,
work hard and you'll be a respected artist.

Come with me to Edo.
Kanouya-san is going to help me .
... find clients and a place to work. I'm sure he can help you out, too...



Thank you...
...Yukitatsu.

After what happened last night...
...staying here will only bring you more trouble
Ayame, are you sure?
I'm sorry, ma'am.
You don't have to worry about me.
I can't bring you trouble.
HA HA HA

I don't want him to worry about me.
Can you tell him that for me?
By the way..
...if my brother comes looking for me, tell him I went to see a friend in Hatago
Of course
Don't worry, I won't starve.
Besides, tsubofuri is the only skill I have.
All right, good-bye!
Take care of yourself!

Oh, Jintetsu!
Ayame...
You decided to leave, eh?
TUT..
RUSTLE
Here's money for the last job.
It's not much, but please take it.
Of course.
I never had the chance to start my life over...
Ayame, where are you going?
At least I got to help out my brother.
I don't want to be a burden for him, though.

I guess I'll ask the dice.
Who knows?
Good-bye!
Let's hope to see each other alive again!
We should...
...be on our way.
So, Jintetsu...
How much is in the package?
ODDY
ODDY
RUSTLE

I was expectin' that, but still..
MUMBLE
GAH! Only the top and bottom coins are real!
Yukitatsu-san?

I need a little more time.

Kanouya-san.
Are you ready?

We need to get to Kuragano before dark today.
Here, let me help you.

You said someone was coming with you.
I don't see anyone else?

Oh, I see...

Unfor-tunately...
...the plan fell through due to an emergency.

This is unusual. . what prompted you to paint this?
Nothing, really...
You have a new painting/
Oh, yes...
It's decadent, yet beautiful and elegant—
It's a beautiful painting.
THE END OF CHAPTER 10

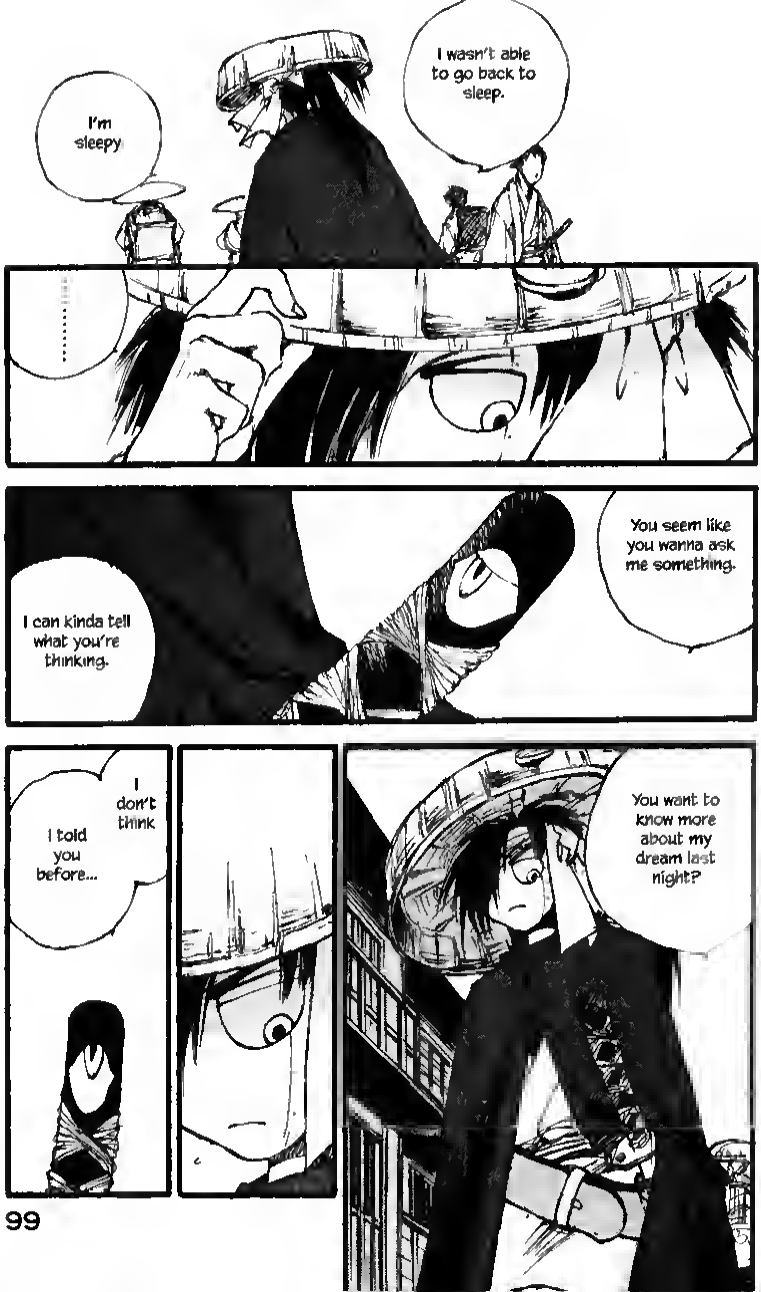
Haganemaru-sama
I'll be praying for your fast and safe return.
I pray that you fulfill your duty quickly...
...for you to come back to me.
I will always be waiting...

第十一幕
WHISPER DOLL
(雪暮夜之中追忆)
Chapter 11 —— 第一景 —— Episode 1
("Lovers' Death on a Snowy Night")

GRAB
CREAK
CREAK

CREAK
It's a woman...
A prostitute maybe?
Doubtful. Something's not right.
It's too dark, so I can't see well—
CREAK

I think I just got nervous.
Sorry to wake you.
She's gone.
I'm going back to dreaming..
.....


I'm sleepy
I wasn't able to go back to sleep.
.....
You seem like you wanna ask me something.
I can kinda tell what you're thinking.
I don't think
I told you before...
You want to know more about my dream last night?

I used to be human, back in the day.
There's no point hiding it, so I'll tell you.
I was born in Hitachi Kasama. I was the eldest son of Kanemasa Fujinami the vassal for the Hachimangoku Castle.
I used to be a samurai.
You don't seem surprised.
...just like you, I was brought back from the dead.
Well.

!
The woman in my dream was...
TINK
TINK
座

Everyone, come see the show!
RATTLE
カラ
RATTLE
カラ
TINK
チン
TAMAYURA, THE MOVING DOLL
傀儡人形
玉響
The show starts tomorrow!
It's the latest and greatest show featuring the amazing moving doll!
There's been a murder!

A woman's body's been found!
On the riverbank at the edge of town!

It's spread to this town?
A murder?

ZAWA
ZAWA

This is so tragic.
The victim's name is O-kyo She worked at Sanoya.
Why was she killed?
Hey, hey... excuse me.
Let me pass.
I don't know.
Along the Nakasen Road, there have been several cases of women being murdered.
BASAH
All the victims are shop attendants, barmaids...
They've all been killed with a dagger to the heart.
Rest in peace ..

There's no sign of robbery, but it's probably best to keep an eye out for drifters.
Do you think this murder is related to the murders along this area?
Boss..
but judging by her kimono, I think it's a different woman.
I thought it could be the woman we saw last night,
Hey, you! Hold it right there, traveler.
.....
Somebody is bound to suspect us.
Jintetsu, we should get outta here now.

I'm just a drifter.
I came here by traveling along Reihersh Highway into Takasaki. I arrived in this town last night.
You belong to a clan?
Where are you from?

If you think I'm the murderer, then you've got the wrong guy.
Excuse me.

Remove yer mask.
My face is pretty messed up underneath.
I won't
That sounds suspicious.
You can't show your face? Are you a wanted man?
If you refuse to remove it...
...then I'll do it for you!
THRUST
SMASH

Boss!
THUD
Uh...
You brought this upon yourself.
Whaddya think yer doin'!
Excuse me, boss.

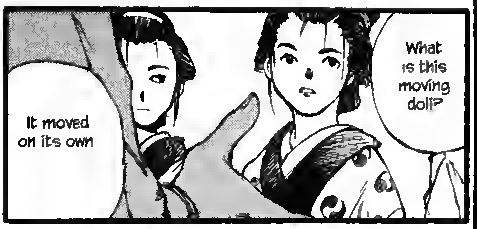
What?! He's Jintetsu of Steel?
JOLT
Oh...
Nobody's seen his real face...
He's the legendary assassin! They say when you see his blade, you'll be surrounded by blood...
Impossible! Jintetsu of Steel can't be a kid!
When my sword speaks, it'll cost you 5, 10 ryou.
I'm not so hungry for blood that I would kill a random shop attendant.

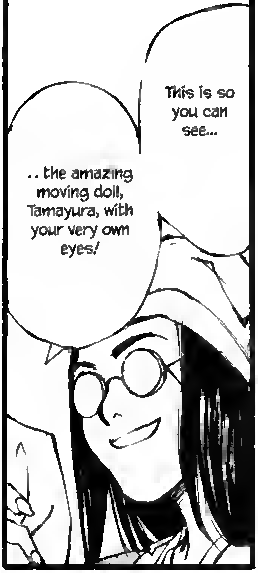
Excuse me.

...I'd rather not get wrapped up in this murder business .
I'd rather rest up at this inn, but...
We have the Usui Pass. It's a steep climb ..

Today, we have a free preview show to introduce our company to the town!
The Engetsu Troupe will start their production tomorrow!

Everyone, come see the show!
We'll have to travel at night, we've got no choice





This doll isn't like the dolls you've seen that pour tea or pull carts! Karakuri dolls in this era commonly poured tea, hence the remark.

It's a doll that looks so human, you'll have to see it to believe it!
We just passed them earlier today.
.....
It's free today! If you see her today, you'll be back tomorrow!

I heard of them before.
I hear they're from O-shu.
They have an unusual setup where a beautiful doll plays various roles in a play along with actors.
The show's about to begin!
Anyone else coming in?
Don't know how they do it, but...
...I'm sure Genkichi would have loved to see this doll.
Engetsu Troupe
Hey, you!
You've been hanging around for a bit.

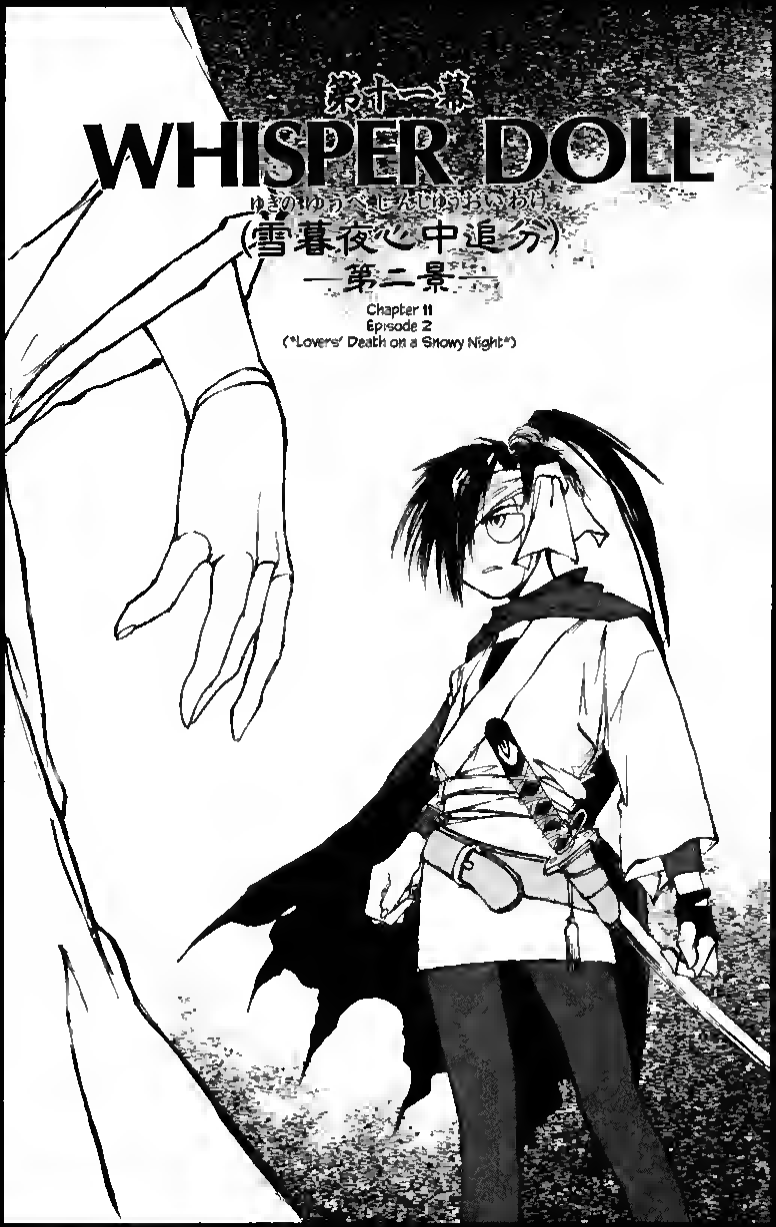
...this doll isn't just a puppet?
Are you sure...
If you're interested, take a look/
It's free/
If you think we're lying, come take a look/
The show's about to start/
I don't wanna feel like I'll be missing tomorrow's show.
I'm planning to leave here.
If you watch this and you think it's wonderful...
...then I'm sure you'll tell people while you're on the road.
It'll be just a little bit of your time
.....

CLICK
SLIDE
CLAP
CLAP
CLAP
CLICK
CLICK

I've heard of his name before.
Thank you for coming to see the preview of our troupe's theatrical production.
Starting tomorrow, we will be performing for 5 days in this town.
Our production is unusual, so I hope you are able to enjoy the show.
We have decided on a preview to help the audience appreciate and understand the production.
I am Sogetsu, the troupe master.
Please, feast your eyes
on our main attraction.
Tamayura, the moving doll!

WOW!

Haganemaru-sama.
..I will always be waiting for you to come back to me.
Oto..
THE END OF CHAPTER 11 EPISODE 1


第十一幕
WHISPER DOLL
雪暮夜心中追分
—第二景—
Chapter 11
Episode 2
("Lovers' Death on a Snowy Night")

PAUSE
Didya see 'er move? Is she really a doll?
She can't be!
She has to be human!
Yeah, but take a look at her hand.
CTR
CTR

Our play is neither...
...kabuki nor puppetry. It's a new form of theater.
Her face looks artificial.
Her movement is slightly awkward.
This beautiful doll, Tamayura...
...will perform on-stage in place of a human actress.
Starting tomorrow, for 5 days,
we will perform "Lovers' Death on a Snowy Night."
We will greatly appreciate your patronage.

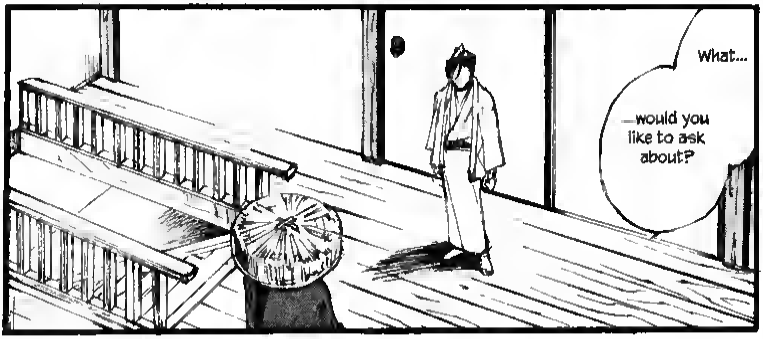
Come back and see us tomorrow!
We'll be back.
Jintetsu...
Do you mind visiting backstage?

How would I know? Check the boxes.
Troupe master!
Where did my wig go?

See me?
How can I help you?

A traveler is waiting to see you

I've just got a few questions.
I promise not to take much of your time.


What...
...would you like to ask about?

About Tamayura?
She was...
Your doll..
I'm wondering by whom and where she was crated.
I'm going to be direct...
.. to keep things short and sweet.
You?
Before I started this troupe, I used to create dolls.
A few years ago, I decided to focus my energy on acting and gave up doll making.
I created Tamayura.

Do you happen to know the daughter of Tsunanoshin Tanizawa? He was a samurai in Hitachi Kasama.
The daughter's name is Oto.

I see.
I have one more question for you.

Traveler, why ..
...are you asking me these questions?

I don't.

I see...

A few years ago...
..a dying samurai in Takamatsu asked me to give a message to the lady. She looked like your doll.

Troupe master... excuse me. .

.....
At a shrine right outside of town.

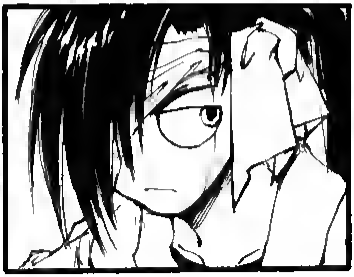
I have to attend a rehearsal. I must get going.
Where will you be staying tonight?

What did the toseinin want with you?
He just had some general questions.
It was nothing, really
What should I do with this costume?
Check the inventory list.

Sorry for taking up your time.
It seems like I overreacted.

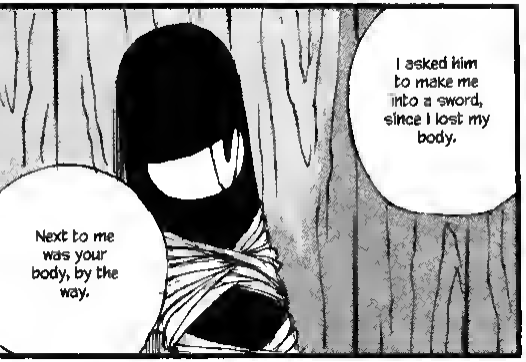
His dolls were famous for looking incredibly real.
He was a famous doll maker.
I knew I heard the man's name somewhere. Now I remember ..

I doubt there's any connection between the doll maker and Oto.
I had heard rumors, but he's better than I expected.



I haven't told you...
...I know you might have figured it out already.
.....
The woman in my dream..
Oto was...
...my fiancée.
It was something our parents decided.
We grew up together, and we even kind of expected that, so there was no discomfort.

After we were engaged...
...my father was killed by a ronin
over some minor disagreement.
As the eldest son of a samurai...
..you have to avenge your father's death.
That, and also receive permission from the lord, write letters to the shogunate,
and go through this messy process, before finally going out to get revenge.
Only about one in a hundred men succeed.
As the eldest son, I didn't go through the standard route. I just left.
I was fortunate to find the ronin during the following year, in Takamatsu. I was able to get my revenge...
...but the injury from the fight ended up killing me, and I died in Takamatsu.
People did not know my identity, so I was buried at a local temple.


I asked him to make me into a sword, since I lost my body.
Next to me was your body, by the way.

When I came to, I was in Genkichi's cabin. My brain and eyeball was all that was left of me.

Well, you know the rest
I had a life before this, just like you.

I do worry about Oto, but ..
...it's not worth dwelling on the past.
She was more like a sister to me.

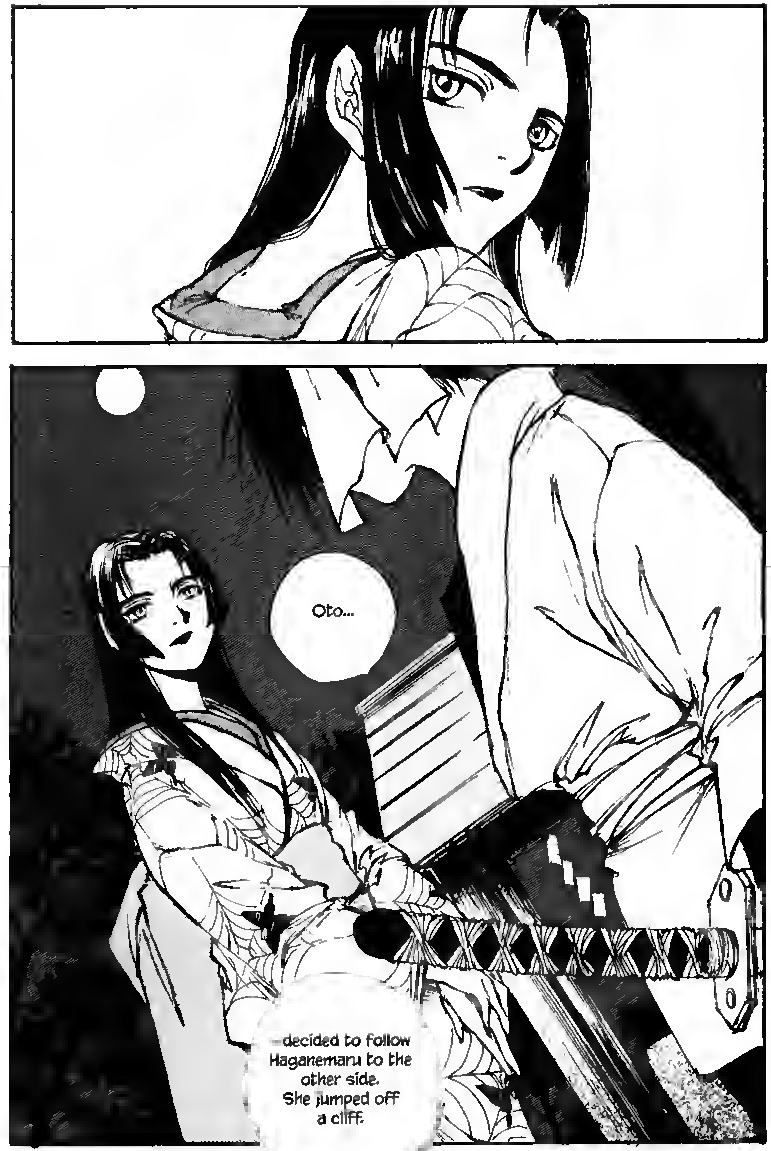
GRAB
チッ
!
.....
CREAK
CREAK
CREAK
This sound..

CREAK
キ…
ZA

The samurai that died in Takamatsu...
Was him name Haganemaru?
Who...
...are you?
...Oto...
So you are...
I carried an injured samurai ..
to the doctor in Takamatsu
His name was Haganemaru, I beheve.
.....
Please answer my question.

Before he died, he told me about you.
He asked me to tell you that I was sorry if I ever passed through Hitachi.
I see..
You're supposed to be in Hitachi.
What are you doing traveling with a theater troupe?

Why do you..
...pretend to be a doll?
Tama-yura..
I am...
..a doll
I am Tamayura, the doll.
Oto no longer exists anymore in this world.
What...
...do you mean by that?



THE END OF CHAPTER 11
EPISODE 2

第十一幕

WHISPER DOLL

ゆきの ゆうべ しんじゅうおいわけ

(雪暮夜心中追分)

—第三景—

Chapter 11 Episode 3

("Lovers' Death on a Snowy Night")

I threw myself off a cliff...
My body was shattered on the rocks below, and engulfed by the waves.
...right after I heard that he was dead.
I was seriously injured, but I did not die.
All I could do was lie still and suffer immense physical pain.
I just waited for death...

Sogetsu's troupe passed by, and they saved me.

!
I was soon able to move. I was recovering...
However, my face and hands were covered with prominent, permanent scars.
The waves carried me to a strange town, and I was treated by a local doctor there.
Sogetsu would come by to check on me while his troupe was performing there.

You were given another chance at life!
Don't do something so stupid!
Let me go, Sogetsu! I want to die!
I'm not worth the life I was given!
CRASH
I cannot bear to live like this anymore!
Please, just let me go!
Let me die...
Please...
Even if I did, I'd live my life inside the house, afraid to venture out.
I don't know what to do. I don't want to return home...

I never gave up my death wish.
I would attempt to die, but I would be stopped.
The pattern kept repeating...
Sogetsu allowed me to join his troupe.
I joined because I wanted to help him to repay his kindness.
I'll do what I can to erase the scars.
I understand, Oto-san.
One day, Sogetsu made me an offer to help me.
You can do...
...that?

Your scars cannot be eliminated by simple makeup.
I'll do anything to get rid of my scars...
Yes, but it doesn't erase them from your skin.
I'll be creating a layer of artificial skin
I'll need to mix up a batch of special paint with glue and paint that onto your skin.
I can only make it less noticeable.
The biggest problem is that it looks artificial to the human eye.
It was something I used to use for my dolls.
It will attract unwanted attention.
It's paint, so it won't last very long.
This is the best I can do.
We'll have to touch up and repaint often.

All I wanted to do was to get rid of my scars...
I had no choice but to accept his offer...
.....
As a result, I was reborn as Tamayura, the doll.
Are you happy now?
Oto...

I'm sure you understand...

...I have no other way to live
I chose a life of gracing the stage as a doll and receiving adulation...
...rather than live the wretched life of a scarred woman.

You must be Jintetsu of Steel.
I heard about a toseinin that was partially made of steel.

I hear you refuse to show your face...
...under your mask due to the scars?

That's right.
However, my mask is very different from the one you choose to wear.
It's expected for a toseinin to have a few scars on their face.
There's no point in covering up my face with a steel mask.

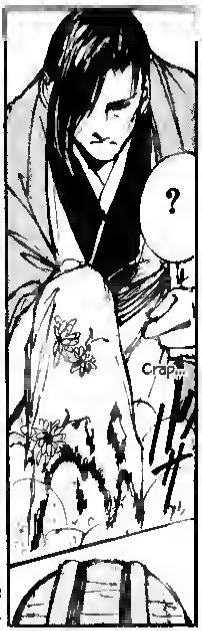
The mask I wear is very different from you.
I could show my scarred face,
but this mask allows me to face up to my sins.
I don't know of any other way...
...to live my life.
Unlike me, you haven't lost any body parts.
It's still possible for you to live a full life as a human being.
Being human isn't just about having a body.
The body is only a container for your soul.
Think about it that way.

For a woman to live with a horrible scar on her face...
...is a fate worse than death.
I don't think...
...you would ever understand.
That is what makes me valuable.
I am a doll.
That is what brings me happiness.
I am a doll .

I have to return to my lodging.
Please forget what you have heard tonight.
Hold on...
Did you by any chance...
...take a walk last night?
.....
No...

Oto...
Did she go see the toseinin that came by earlier?
...have you seen Oto-san?
No, I haven't.
Bunkichi...

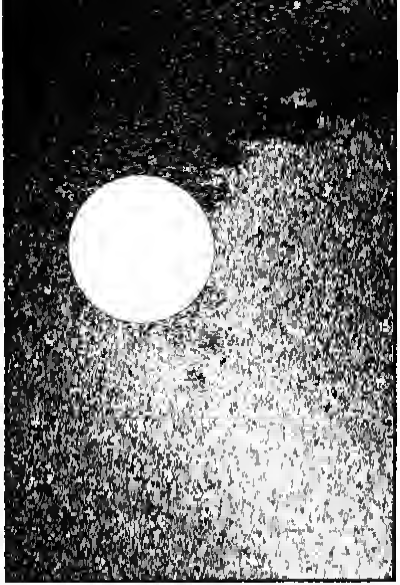
Oto?


?
Crap.

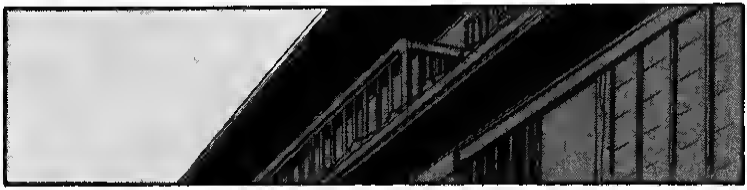
Are you happy now?
You were a famous doll maker.
You retired from your craft at such a young age Wh
Sogetsu...

Why are you asking me about that?
I was just curious.
You don't speak about your past
I saw the limitation of doll making.
Even if you create a realistic doll it's never going to be human.
I quit because I lost confidence.
I think that was devastating to me.
It's interesting. The closer dolls physically resembled people, the less human the dolls became at the same time.

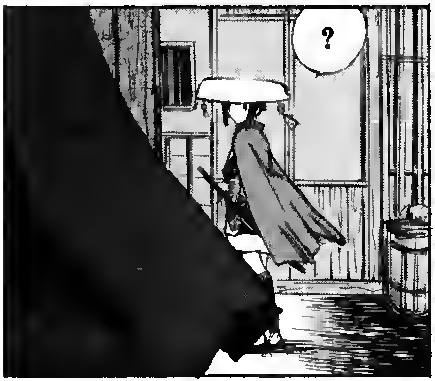
I am a doll. That is what makes me valuable.
I am a doll .. That is what makes my existence acceptable ..
GATAN
ガタン



Dolls can never compare to a human being...



I guess I'll find a place to sleep around here for tonight
I wonder if Jintetsu already passed through the mountain...
ZZT


?

I wonder if there's any good spots around here..
CREAK

.....
ZZT
SWOOSH
Smell of blood...

THE END OF CHAPTER 11 EPISODE 3

第十一幕

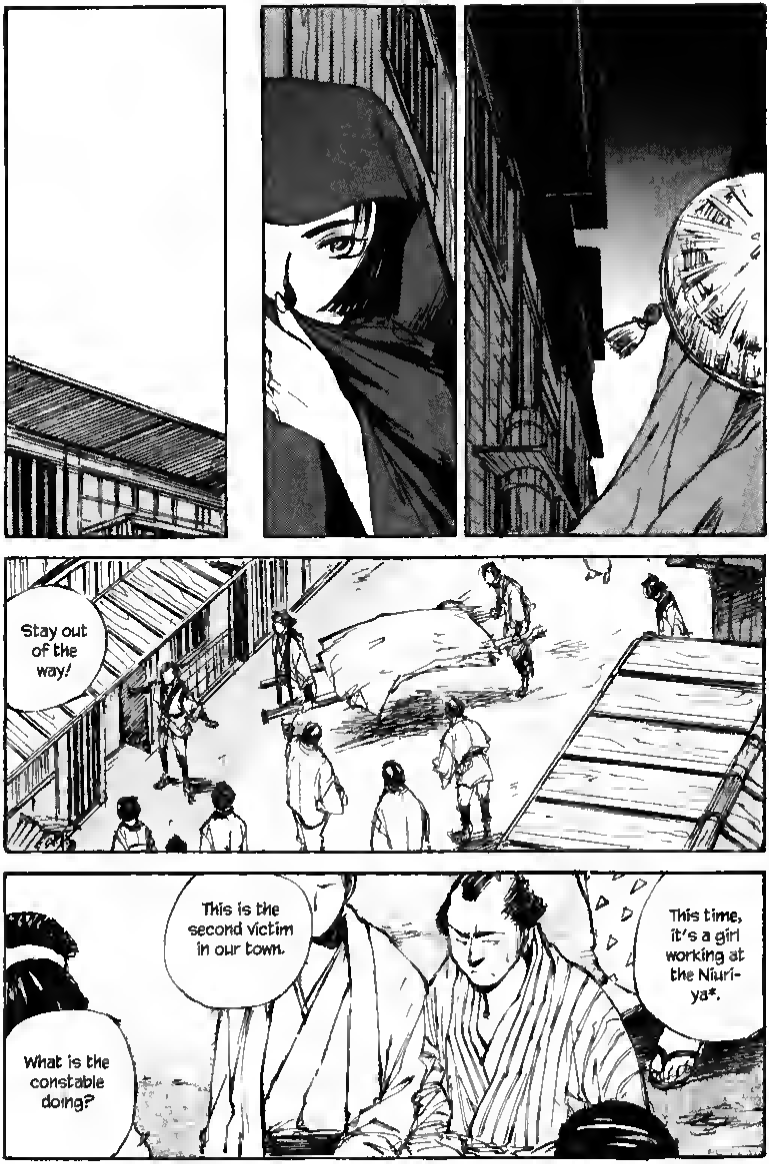
WHISPER DOLL

ゆきの ゆうべ しんじゅうおいわけ

(雪暮夜心中追分)

—第四景—

Holy crap!
STAGGER
STAGGER
I can't have anyone see me with the body...
I gotta get outta here.
DASH
JOLT

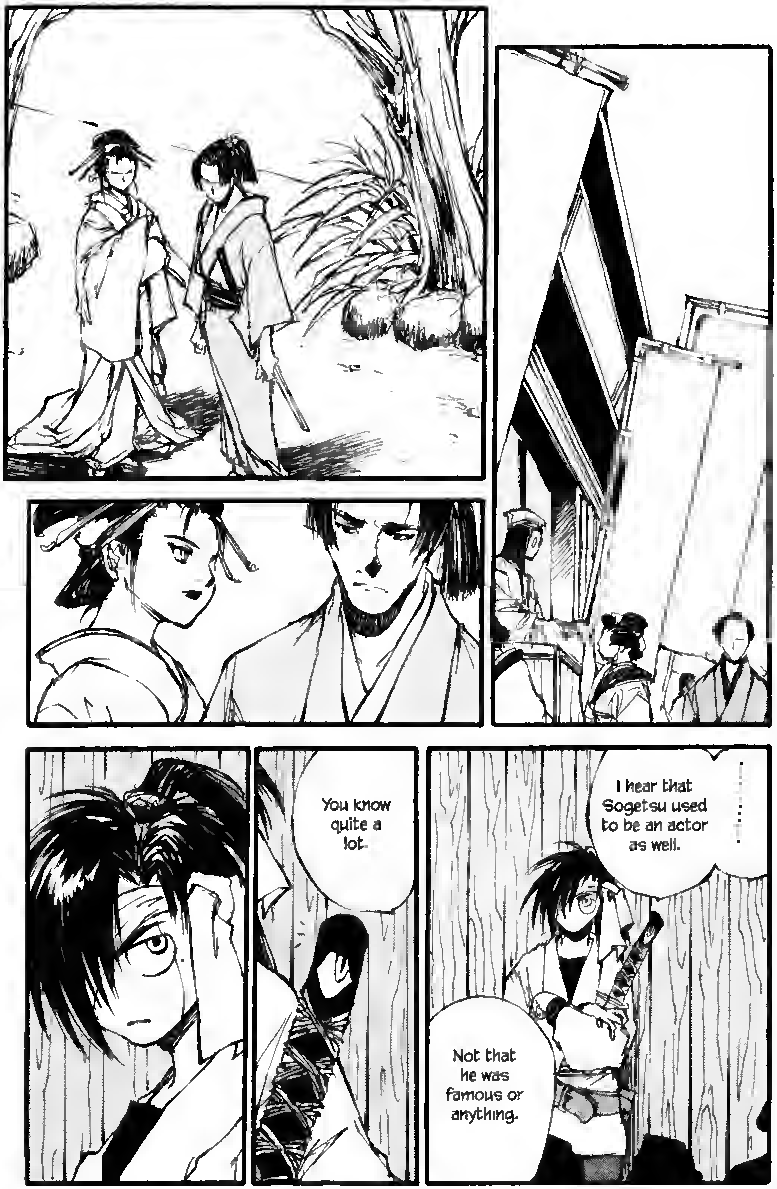

Stay out of the way!
What is the constable doing?
This is the second victim in our town.
This time, it's a girl working at the Niuri-ya*.

* NOTE: Niuri-ya is a shop that sells boiled veggies, fish, and beans.

I don't get it.
Boss...
There's usually a motive for murder.
Hmmm...
It's hard to figure out these random murders.
There's no robbery, and the victims didn't have enemies...
Lie low if you don't wanna become a suspect.

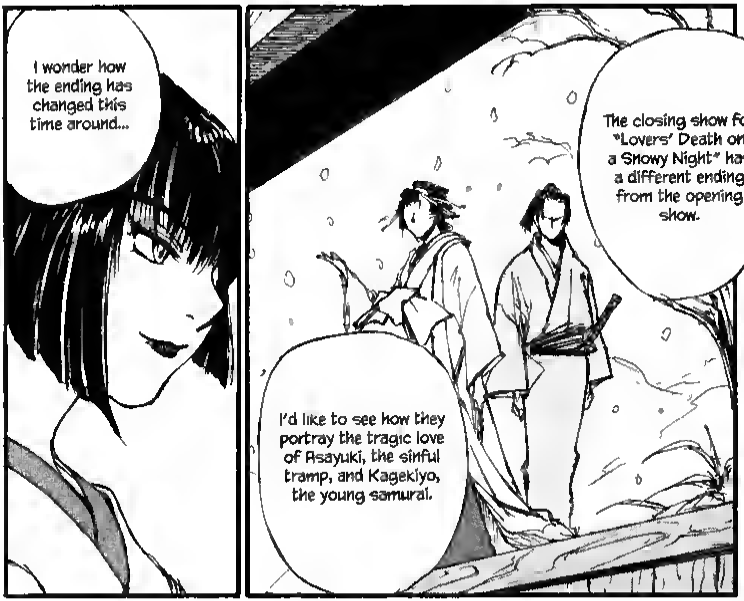
SHAKE
This happened before?
What are you...
Shhh! I don't want the constable to see me.
Yeah, two days ago, when I arrived here.
What's up?
I saw a strange woman last night
I saw her leave the crime scene.
I smelled blood on her
Uh...this sounds weird, but...
...she didn't look quite human.
She had no expression, and there was something artificial about her face.
She almost looked like a ghost...

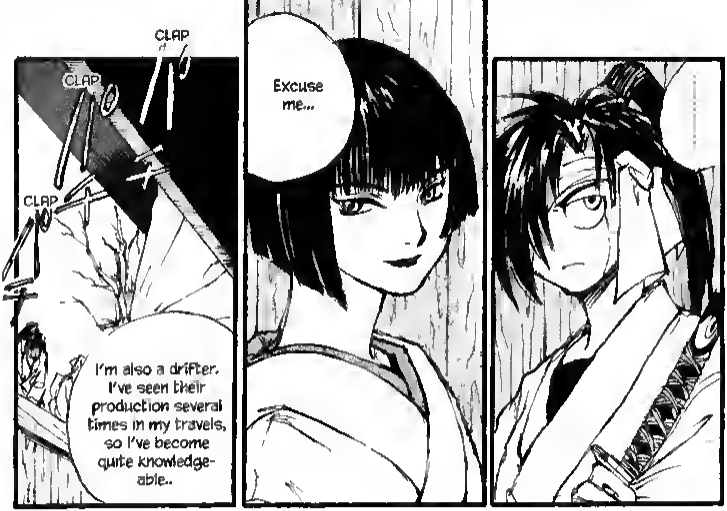
Artificial...
Why?
Have you talked to anyone about this?
I haven't told anyone. I just arrived here last night.
Do me a favor and don't say anything...
...until I find out more.

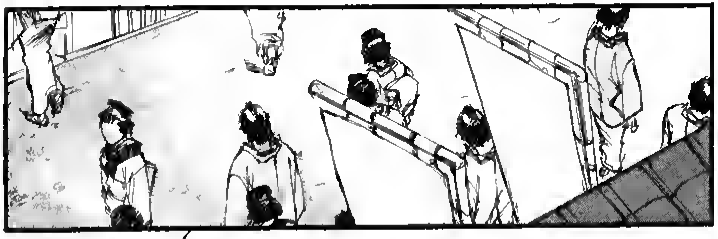

I hear that Sogetsu used to be an actor as well.
You know quite a lot.
Not that he was famous or anything.

At the beginning of his doll-making career, he was an actor. Doll making was something he started as a side business.

The same play will have different lines and characters.
The story now is very different from the time I saw them perform in Mishima last year.
After he quit doll making, he really focused on theater. He's even trying his hand at playwriting.


I wonder how the ending has changed this time around...
The closing show for "Lovers' Death on a Snowy Night" has a different ending from the opening show.
I'd like to see how they portray the tragic love of Asayuki, the sinful tramp, and Kagekiyo, the young samurai.


CLAP
CLAP
CLAP
I'm also a drifter. I've seen their production several times in my travels, so I've become quite knowledgeable..
Excuse me...



Lady .
...have we met before?

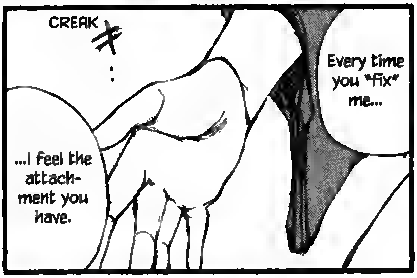
I also walk the back roads, just like you.
We could very well have met in the past...

Jintetsu of Steel, next time I see you, please tell me...
...how the play ends this time.
I'm leaving town tonight.
I'm sure I'll see you again someday.
Your partner...
...needs to watch her back.
!
That's right.
KTZ
...what?
My partner?

FLUTTER
Thank you.
We're done.

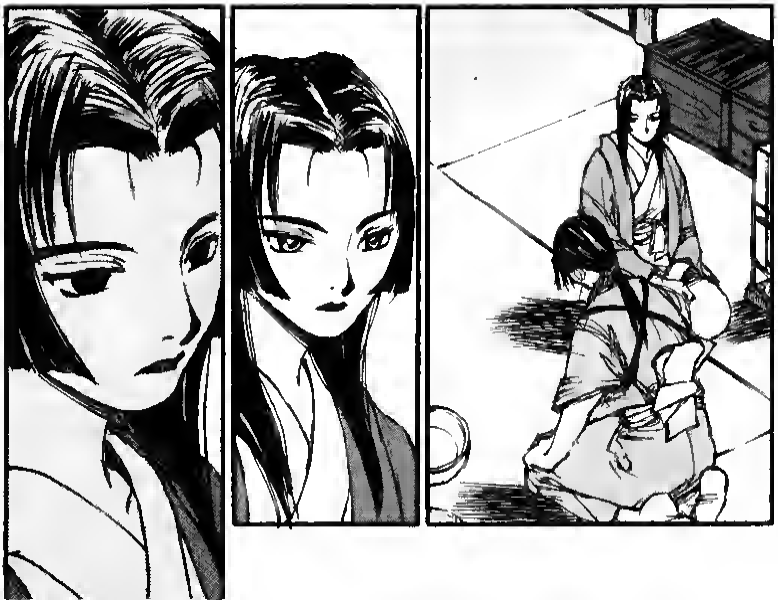
Sogetsu.
Why did you decide to turn me into a doll?
I just need to know...
...what you're really feeling.
Oto .
I don't mean it as an insult to you.
I appreciate everything you've done for me.

You said that you quit making dolls because the limit of the art became intolerable for you.
However, it seems like you still have an attachment to dolls...


CREAK
Every time you "fix" me...
...I feel the attach-ment you have.

I feel as though I supply the body...
...to create your dream of a living doll.

I wanted to be...
..a perfect doll rather than an imperfect woman for you.
What am I...
...to you?
Was that just...
..an illusion on my part?
When you "create" me, you look at me like you're creating a doll.
Oto...
I never wanted to make you into a doll.

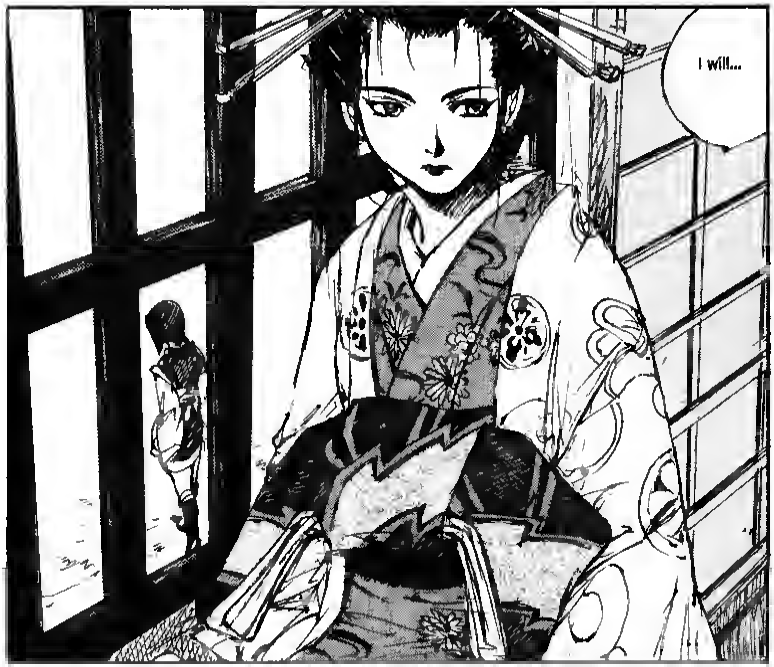
Oto, I...
I am just one of your creations...
Like you said,
the closer I resemble an intact woman, my imperfection becomes more obvious...
.....


I'm sorry.
Please forget what I've said.
RISE
PA-TAN
Oto...
Oto,
I never knew...

That's enough, Jintetsu.
CLACK
CLICK
Wanna play again?
Darn it/ I lost again?

How long does Jintetsu plan on stayin' in this town?
CLACK
What's his connection to the murder?
Who the hell was the woman I saw last night?
She looked more like a doll than a human being...
It's kinda creepy
He told me to keep quiet, but he won't tell me why.
A doll...
That's right... there's a traveling troupe performing in town.
I hear it's about a moving doll that acts like a person...

ENGETSU
ENGETSU
Besides, dolls can't move on their own...
It's not like I got a good look at her face.
Oto-san, please get ready for the Third Act.



THE END OF CHAPTER 11 EPISODE 4

第十一幕

WHISPER DOLL

ゆきのゆうべしんじゅうおいわけ

(雪暮夜心中追分)

——第五景——

Chapter 11 Episode 5

("Lovers' Death on a Snowy Night")

SPLASH
SNAP
CRACK

THUMK

I saw you... last night!
!
RUSTLE
ZAZA
FLING
Freeze!
GRAB

!
You came here to...
...buy my silence?
.....
Who the hell...
...are you?
Are you one of the actors in the play?
Why are you pretending to be a doll?

I'm not some trash you can bribe with money!
Don't underestimate me!
.....
What can I do to ensure your silence?
Who you kill has nothing to do with me.
I won't tell anyone.
...forget about what you saw last night?
Then you will..
What's your relationship to Jintetsu of Steel?
I do have a question, though.
Sure.

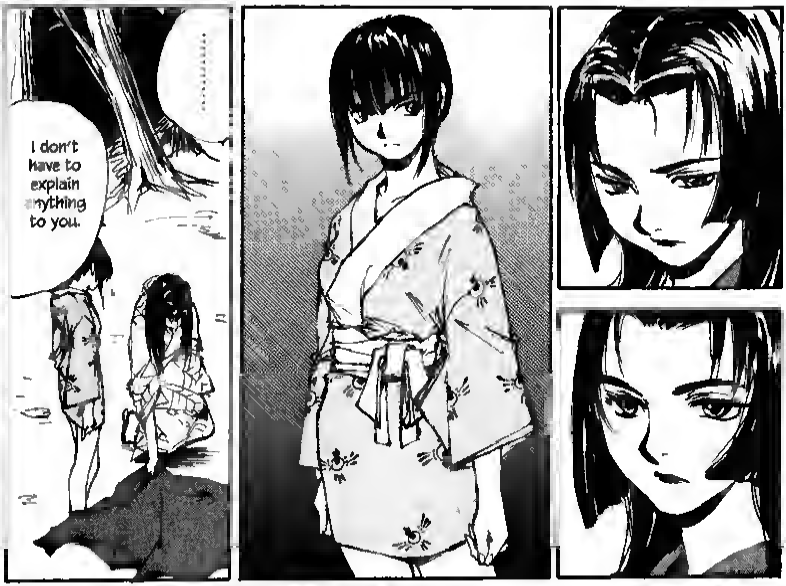
Why do you ask?
Jinteisu of Steel?
That's right.
He's my sworn enemy.
.....
I've been following him so I could kill him.
I thought you would be trouble if you were out to kill him, too.
Your victims may be women, but to kill them with a single thrust to the chest...
You're no ordinary actor.
I can only use the dagger.
I only studied it a little bit...

What?
However...
I don't have any connection to the man.
...he apparently was present when my fiancé died.
I do not have the skill to kill Jintetsu.
About what?
If you've been following him...
...then do you know about this incident?
My fiancé died in Takamatsu.
He was a samurai named Haganemaru.

JOLT
Never heard of the..
Haganemaru?
...a sword by the same man that brought Jintetsu back to life. It's a long story.
I used to be a human, but I've been made into...
I'm a meito named Haganemaru.
.....
Do me a favor and don't say anything..
...until I find out more.

This can't be real.
This has got to be a joke...
NOOO! That's impossible!
I don't know what's going on with him!
When I saw his body...
It was...
You...
...asked about Hagaremaru?
Uh...

...until I find out more.
.....
Yes.
Jintetsu said that...
..he was there when Haganemaru died?
That Haganemaru...
yeah, I saw him briefly, like you suspected.
He was the type of man that would suffer enormously...
...if he knew that his fiancée was killing random women
That's none of your business.
That's right, then...
..why the hell did you ask me that question?
How does a samurai's daughter..
...turn into a murderess?


I don't have to explain anything to you.
Even if I did, you wouldn't understand.
You may be a woman,
but you're a drifter carrying a long sword and wearing a hikimawashi.*

*See Translation Notes.

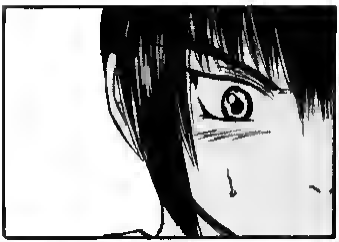
Wait!

Huh..?!

Let me ask you a question..
Do you believe you are real?
What?

You want me to keep my trap shut, right?
Even if I may not understand, answer me, dammit!

You cannot ever beat a truly strong man.
You live your life dressed as a man in a man's world. However, you can never change the fact that you were born a woman.



That's a load of crap!
The minute I think that way is the second I lose!

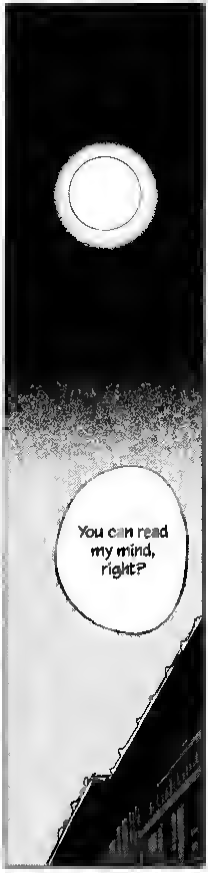
What will you do when you finally realize that?
Will you still try to be stronger than a man?

!

That's right.
However, when you are faced with unwavering reality...
If you know you cannot change despite your longing..
...you will slowly become spiteful.
I'm asking about you.
I was just phrasing the answer so you would understand.
ZA

In every town, Oto will...
...find more victims...
After that, the troupe will leave this town.
Tomorrow is the closing show
How can I stop her?
What can I do?
Too late...
No... We're too late.

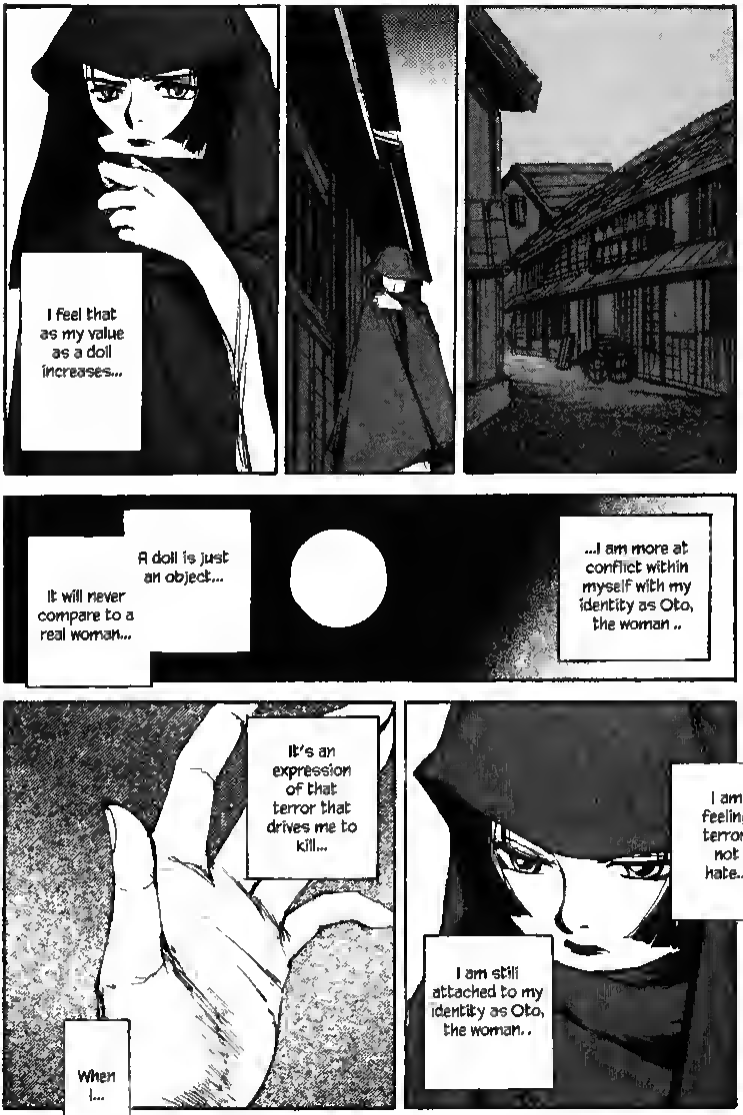
If I had returned to her alive..
It's my fault


You can read my mind, right?

.....

...

Jintetsu...
Can I ask you for a terrible favor?


I feel that as my value as a doll increases...
...I am more at conflict within myself with my identity as Oto, the woman..
A doll is just an object...
It will never compare to a real woman...
I am feeling terror, not hate...
I am still attached to my identity as Oto, the woman..
It's an expression of that terror that drives me to kill...
When I...

Did my heart also become empty, a mere object...
..became a doll, I lost my ability to express myself.

THE END OF CHAPTER 11 EPISODE 5

第十一幕
WHISPER DOLL
(雪暮夜心中追分)
ゆきのゆうべしんじゅうおいわけ

—第六景—

Chapter 11 Episode 6
("Lovers' Death on a Snowy Night")

Why are you doing this?
I don't want you to burden yourself with any more sin.
I have my reasons.

You're right.
I don't work under the constable, and I'm not here to preach about justice.
This is...
...none of your business.
Someday...
...you will be caught.
You will be killed for your crimes.
Right now.
...I can kill you before people know your identity as a murderess.
I was with your fiancé when he died.
I just can't watch his woman die as a murderer.

You're probably right.
FLAP
SLIP
You only met this man in your travels. Why such concern?
I would be wasting this life.
I did try to kill myself, so I don't feel like
This won't make you money. Why would you take it upon yourself to do a dirty job of killing a woman?
Every time I kill, I feel my sense of guilt diminishing...
I was terrified of what I've become .
I think deep inside,
...I wanted someone to stop me.

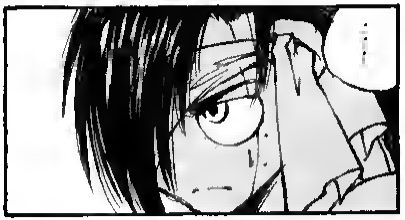
Are you sure you don't have another reason?
I always thought this was strange...
You said I resembled a woman,
but how would you know unless you've met me before?
Did we somehow meet
before I changed...?

If you're going to kill me, please tell me...
...who you really are.
I was a samurai's daughter.
I had never spoken to a toseinin in my life.
What is your real connection with my Haganemaru?

I waited
and waited for him.
When my parents heard of his death, they wanted me to accept another man's hand in marriage.
In my heart, I was already Haganemaru's wife.
Please tell me...
..did Haganemaru really die?

Who are you?
Is Haganemaru really dead?
Please tell me the truth.
Therefore, death no longer scared me.

I told you the truth from the beginning.
The reason I'm going to kill you...
...is that we're both no longer completely human, but...
...you've committed a crime that you must pay for.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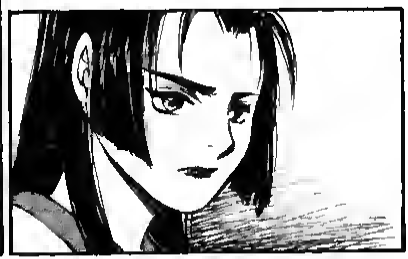
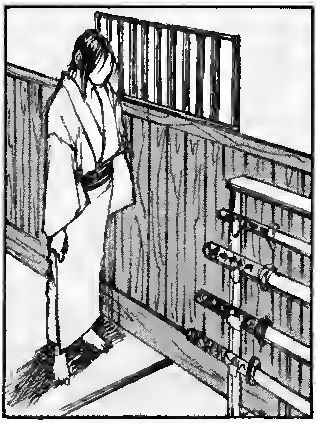
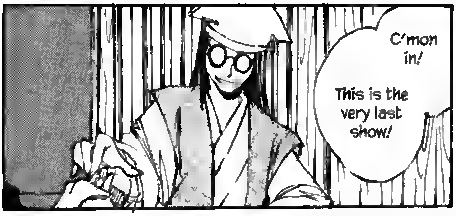


You should pay for your sins...
...while you still have a human heart...
Say your prayers!
SHING

CLICK
カチ



SASAH


C'mon in!
This is the very last show!

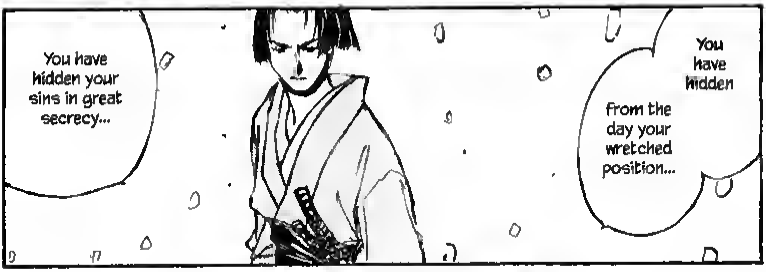
TAMAYURA THE DOLL
人形遊貫
ENGETSU
円月

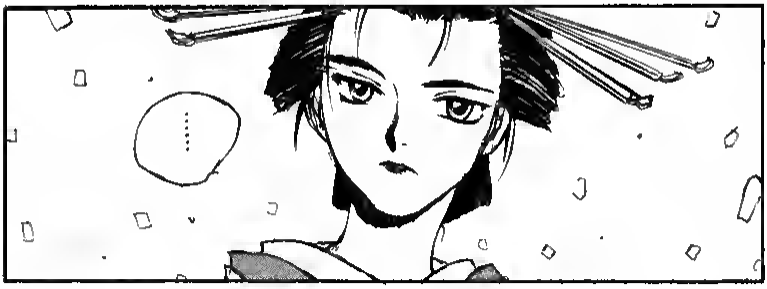
Jintetsu.
I couldn't do it.
I thought I was the only one that could stop her.
I was wrong.
What should I do?

Wait...
His lines have changed.

I will disappear...
...like the snow.

The snow shall disappear,
but your guilt will remain...


You have hidden your sins in great secrecy...
You have hidden from the day your wretched position...



Oh, Kagekiyo-sama!
THRUST
This guilt shall color the snow a bright crimson...
We shall prepare to embrace death together...

No matter how hard a human tries to be a doll...
...they cannot change the fact that they're human.
That truth...
I finally understand...
...was the soul of the living doll...
I should have...
...loved you as you were...
I should not have...
...made you into a doll...

Sogetsu...
I just didn't have the confidence...

...sure about this?
Are you...

Yes.

CLICK
CLICK
CLAP
CLAP
CLAP

CHIRP
We're leaving..
I would have liked to burn incense for her...

The rest of the troupe is heading to Usui.
Where are you headed to?
No...
Makoto...
Heh!
None of your business!
BASAH
I don't think so.
I think they're going to take the Hokkoku Road when the road splits, and lay the bodies to rest at Zenkoku Temple.
Why don't you burn incense for them there?

!
JARI
I remember you...
You were that traveler..
Good day.
Are you alone?

HIGHWAY RIGHT
I have business with the temple along this road...
Yes...
I had to split with my troupe...
This road...
..forks to the right and
left and continues...

It splits...
...never to join again.
-THE END OF KUROGANE VOL 4 -

Translation Notes

Japanese is a tricky language for most Westerners, and translation is often more art than science. For your edification and reading pleasure, here are notes on some of the places where we could have gone in a different direction in our translation of the work, or where a Japanese cultural reference is used.

Tsubofuri, *page 3*
The dealer in Cho-Han Bakuchi is called *Tsubafuri*. In order to prevent cheating, the dealer is shirtless, and exploits Ay's partial attire while dealing. This job, similar to being a *toseinin*, was not considered an honest occupation, especially not for "proper" ladies. Women in this profession had a reputation of being strong and gutsy, which is reflected in Ay's character.

Cho-Han Bakuchi, *page 5*
Cho-Han Bakuchi is a Japanese gambling game using dice. It is played using two standard, six-sided dice. The dealer shakes the dice in a bamboo cup, and overturns the cup onto the floor. The players place bets for the sum of the numbers showing on the dice as either *Cho* (even) or *Han* (odd). Once all bets are placed, the dealer removes the cup to display the dice. Moneylenders sometimes operated gambling dens, acting as the house and collecting losing bets. The game was very popular with the gamblers, and it is still popular with the *yakuza* to this day. In *Kurogane*, the players are playing the game in a traditional setting at a gambling den. The players sit on the *tatomi* mat (traditional flooring in Japanese homes made of tightly woven straw mats).

Hikimawashi, *page 20*
Hikimawashi is a sleeveless cape used for traveling, and functions as a raincoat. Oiled paper made from the Paulownia tree was inserted to increase water resistance. Makoto's red cape is an example of a *Hikimawashi*.

Yotaka, *page 97*
Yotoka is an old-fashioned slang for a type of lower-class prostitute who walks the streets late at night in search of customers rather than work in a brothel.

TEARS OF THE PAST

Samurai Jintetsu's existence changed forever when he died and was resurrected in a new armor-plated body. Now the cyborg assassin travels the open road, trying to escape the painful memories of his past life.

Then he meets Ayame, a female drifter who just might understand his plight. She, too, is haunted by her past. Will she make the ultimate sacrifice to save a loved one in peril? The past also catches up with Haganemaru, Jintetsu's high-tech talking sword, when a gorgeous moving "doll" named Tamayura comes back into his life. She may be involved in a series of grisly murders, but will Haganemaru's love for her stop him from finding out the truth?

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